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SYRIA AND THE SPOILS OF WAR

David Cameron has got his majority vote from Parliament to order British fighter jets to attack the Islamic State or Isis in Syria. Britain, already in military action in Iraq, will be joining France, US, Russia and other countries to degrade Isis and contain its influence. The ultimate end-game for Syria is to stop the civil war and for Britain to join the victory for the spoils of war. This is what war is all about; the opening of markets, the protection of trade routes, securing borders, getting access to raw resources and preventing other countries disrupting trade routes and spheres of influence.

Syria, where there has been a civil war for four years with the loss of over 200,000 lives, will now have even more death and destruction meted out by a foreign legion of air forces as though the hundreds of previous missiles fired on an almost daily basis were not enough. The civilian death toll will rise but it will be written off as “*collateral damage*”.

Cameron’s adventure, backed by many Labour MP’s is just small change for British capitalism in its attempt to gain a secure foot-hold in Syria and in any post-Islamic state settlement. And that is what Syrian intervention is all about. The terrorism in Paris is a convenient excuse for military action; the creation of a moral panic by Cameron and his media allies has been used to get his way in Parliament and allow him to order the air strikes. Post-Isis Britain will want to be at the negotiating table; they will want a cut of the action with the potential writing of new borders, ageing pipe lines through gulf-states, Iraq and Syria to convenient ports and the securing of lucrative trade deals.

The Civil War in Syria started in 2011 following the so-called Arab Spring which took place across the Middle East only to peter out and be replaced by the rise of dictators in in Egypt and Islamist movements elsewhere of which Isis is just one of several terrorist organisations in the region. Protests in Syria took place against the dictator, President Bashar- al–Assad. Assad responded with brutal beatings, torture, imprisonment and killing of his opponents. Those who escaped his brutality formed themselves into armed groups and fought back, each group linked to foreign backers from the US, Europe, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Turkey while Assad received support and military supplies from Iran and Russia.

And the direct entry of Russia in the civil war in Syria is another reason why British capitalism wants to be there. What is at stake? Russia wants to protect the area of Syria controlled by Assad in order to ensure its navy can use the port in Tartus. Tartus hosts a Russian naval supply and maintenance facility including the Amur class floating workshop PM-138, capable of providing technical maintenance to Russian warships deployed in the Mediterranean. This strategic Port is one of the reasons why Putin supports the Syrian government and has troops and an operational airfield in Syria fighting opponents of Assad. Britain and the US would like their ships in Tartus not the Russians and if Assad goes and is replaced with a leader more amenable to the West they might get their way.

Learning from History

What unintended consequence could upset a future carve-up of Syria? Turkey and the Kurds is one dissent into the anarchy now seen in Libya which was of Cameron’s other military “*triumphs*”. How would Turkey, a member of NATO, respond to a further Kurdish advance into strategic areas of Syria? It is already alarmed by the rise of a Kurdish enclave on its southern frontier with

Syria. It knows that the Democratic Union Party (PYD) is essentially the Syrian branch of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) against whom it has been fighting a guerrilla war since 1984. The US and British governments are supporting the PYD but not the PKK. Ironically the PKK is a proscribed political organisation in the UK. Rather than peace in the region the civil war in Syria will more likely create fresh conflict and war.

Is there not something familiar about the forthcoming post-Isis carve up of Syria? Think back to Yalta when Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill (a hero of Mr Cameron's) met to carve up the world after the end of the Second World War in 1945. Churchill's Diary for October 1944 describes how capitalist countries pursue their interests. In his diary, written while attending a conference in the Soviet Union, Churchill wrote:

The moment was apt for business, so I said "Let us settle about our affairs in the Balkans. Your armies are in Rumania and Bulgaria. We have interests, missions and agents there. Don't let us get at cross-purposes in small ways. So far as Britain and Russia are concerned, how would it do for you to have ninety per cent predominance in Rumania, for us to have ninety per cent of the say in Greece, and go fifty-fifty about Yugoslavia?" While this was being translated I wrote out on a half a sheet of paper:

<i>Rumania</i>	<i>Russia 90%</i>	<i>The others 10%</i>
<i>Greece</i>	<i>Great Britain 90%</i> <i>(in accord with USA)</i>	<i>Russia 10%</i>
<i>Yugoslavia</i>	<i>50-50%</i>	<i>50-50%</i>
<i>Hungary</i>	<i>50-50%</i>	
<i>Bulgaria</i>	<i>Russia 75%</i>	<i>The others 25%</i>

I pushed this across to Stalin, who had by then heard the translation. There was a slight pause. Then he took his blue pencil and made a large tick upon it, and passed it back to us. It was all settled in no more time than it takes to set down... After this there was a long silence. The pencilled paper lay in the centre of the table. At length I said, "Might it not be thought rather cynical if it seemed we had disposed of these issues, so fateful to millions of people, in such an off-hand manner? Let us burn the paper". "No, you keep it" said Stalin (from Triumph and Tragedy, quoted in Robert Black's Stalinism in Britain).

The agreement between these three leaders extended not just to the countries named in Churchill's note, but across the entire globe; the so-called post-war settlement which deteriorated into the cold war. This is what capitalism is all about, competing countries pursuing their own interests at the expense of their competitors, deals done in the shadows and plans laid out for future conflict and war.

What about the Working Class?

The working class of the world do not share the same interests as the capitalist class and their governments. In war the working class bear the brunt of the pain and death as victims in terrorist attacks, in becoming displaced refugees, civilian casualties and armed combatants on the battle field.

If the capitalist class have interests in security, trade routes, sphere of influence, raw resources and markets then the working class do not. Workers have no interest because they do not own the means of production and distribution. They do not have oil and gas pipe lines to protect, ports to secure and unhindered trade routes. All the working class have is their ability to work which they are forced to sell as a commodity for a wage and salary. As an exploited class the working class have no country; they have no interest in supporting their employers' wars and the have everything to gain by acting their own class interest and becoming socialists.

And it is only as socialists that a start can be made to stop terrorism, conflict and war by getting rid of its cause; capitalism. Capitalism causes war and while capitalism exists as global system of class exploitation wars will persist from one generation to the next.

Do you think for a minute that a post-Isis Syria will solve the questions of the two million refugees? Will it solve the problems facing the working class in Europe, Russia or the US? Will it stop future terrorism, conflict and war? No it will not.

The carve-up of Syria will only repeat the carve-up of the world after the meeting at Yalta, in the Crimea. The dominant countries will get what they want while the problems of poverty, hunger and unemployment will just persist in the Middle East as it will elsewhere in the world. From the working class interest wars solve nothing only the abolition of capitalism and its replacement with world socialism will end war.

Socialists have been telling workers ever since the outbreak of the First world War in 1914 that the working class has no interest in war. This is what the Socialist Party of Great Britain, for example, said in 1936:

The Socialist Party of Great Britain, like a voice crying in the wilderness, has always maintained that capitalism and war are inseparable. There can be no capitalism without conflicts of economic interest. From these arise the national rivalries and hatreds, the fears and armaments which may at any time provoke war on a terrifying scale

This argument, from the SPGB's 1936 pamphlet, WAR AND THE WORKING CLASS, remains equally valid today.

The Socialist Party of Great Britain opposition to wars is on grounds of class and class might seem an old fashioned term. But it is a fact that most people live by selling their labour-power for wages or salaries.

Socialists argue that workers should not let themselves be dragged into wars caused by disputes between different sections of the capitalist class. As we stated in the 1936 pamphlet:

There is only one safe rule for the working class to follow when urged by the capitalists to support capitalist wars. No matter what form the appeal may take, they should examine the question in the light of working class interests. Ask yourself the question: 'Have the working class of one nation any interest in slaughtering (and being slaughtered by) the workers of another?'; 'Have they any interest in supporting one national section of the capitalist world against another?' ..."

The Socialist case to prevent terrorism and war

There is only one thing which has not been tried to end war. There has never been socialism in the world.

With socialism there will not be any more war; there will be no armed forces for the propertied class to protect its property; there would be no production for sale and profit; there would be no markets; there would be no need to protect raw resources, trade routes and spheres of influence; the world would not be divided into separate capitalist nations each fighting the other; there would not be government exploiting different languages and religions and there would be no conflict between capitalists and workers because there will be no profit system and no exploiting capitalist class.

Socialism will be organised world-wide on the basis of common ownership and democratic control of the means of production by all of society. Production would be solely and directly for use. The function of production would be to make goods available to all society. There would be free access.

To achieve socialism requires foremost, the winning over of the working class to an understanding and acceptance of the Socialist case. It is a socialist principle that you cannot contemplate socialism being run except by socialists. Socialism is not possible until a socialist majority democratically gain control of the machinery of government (including the armed forces) as well as the means of production and distribution. Until then there can only be capitalism, terrorism and war.

A socialist working class has got to take conscious political action within a principled socialist party in order to get democratic control of the machinery of government, including the armed forces. To believe you can have socialism – the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society - without political class struggle is naïve, idealistic and utopian.

A socialist majority has to gain control of parliament and Local Councils. This is the only way for the capitalist class to be disposed and for the working class to establish socialism. And in ridding the world of war and conflict: “*Socialism will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race and sex*” (Clause 4 DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES of the Socialist Party of Great Britain 1904)

WHAT A CARVE-UP: THE SYKES-PICOT AGREEMENT

The Sykes-Picot Agreement of May 1916 provided that Britain would receive control over what is now Jordan, southern Iraq and Haifa in Israel while France would get what is now Syria, Lebanon, northern Iraq, Mosul and south-eastern Turkey, including Kurdistan. What is now Palestine, excluding Haifa and Acre, would become subject to international administrations. Also Britain and France would retain free passage in the region for trade and military matters. Apparently all was concluded in secret over an agreeable dinner with some fine brandy. Plus ça change.

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WHY JEREMY CORBYN IS NOT A SOCIALIST

There is a serious political problem surrounding the Labour Party's new leader, Jeremy Corbyn. Jeremy Corbyn says he is a socialist. The media says he is a socialist. His supporters and detractors all say that he is a socialist. But socialists don't.

Why are socialists out of step with everyone else? Why do we say that Corbyn is not a socialist?

It is all about what you mean by socialism. For socialists, socialism is a world-wide social system where production will take place just to meet human need. Socialism will be established by a socialist majority through a principled political party, socialist delegates, the revolutionary use of the vote and Parliament. This has been the principled and democratic position of the Socialist Party of Great Britain since 1904.

Corbyn's politics, on the other hand, is all about the enactment of piece-meal social reforms, nationalisation policies, Keynesianism in economics, government intervention in the markets, and aggressive taxation of the rich. However, his politics offers no fundamental change to society leaving capitalism intact.

For Corbyn the abolition of capitalism does not enter into the equation. Commodity production and exchange for profit, nation states, the wages system, and class exploitation are unquestioned. Instead, Corbyn wants a fairer and regulated capitalism not its abolition. For a republican he sees nothing inconsistent in either becoming a Privy Councillor or to perform other duties required of the Leader of her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Corbyn even tells us that he is as patriotic as the next person. With reference to the Teesside steel industry he wants to save jobs for "*British workers*" through "*partial nationalisation*" as though this will protect workers from world competition. Workers were still unemployed when the steel industry was fully nationalised and it was a Labour government in 1965 who made over 400,000 miners redundant by closing down "*inefficient*" and unprofitable coal mines (Huw Beynon, Andrew Cox and Ray Hudson, *The Decline of King Coal*). Under the Callaghan government of the late 1970's, 40 mining pits were closed when Corbyn's friend Tony Benn was Energy secretary and if Thatcher had not come to power in 1979, the Labour government would have gone on to close even more coal mines.

And there is no such thing as "*British jobs*" for "*British workers*" just as there are no ring-fenced and protected jobs for workers in France or elsewhere in under World capitalism. Employers think nothing of moving production to other countries to tap into cheaper labour costs or importing in workers from abroad to undercut wages and salaries. In an economic depression unemployable workers are laid off in their tens of thousands. Workers are only employed when it is profitable to do so and when it is not they are made redundant.

Corbyn rejects the class struggle just as he rejects socialism as a distinct social system from capitalism. Socialism will be a world-wide social system without national boundaries and the nationalism and patriotism which goes with it. It will also be a social system without the exploitive wages system; the leaders and the led. Only the working class can establish socialism without the need of leaders like Corbyn, no matter how well-meaning and sincere. The establishment of socialism has to be the work of the working class itself.

In Corbyn's politics there is no end-game, there is no common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society. Corbyn sees capitalism and the profit system going on and on forever. The Labour Party under the leadership of Corbyn exists not to establish socialism but to administer capitalism. Evidence of this was made recently by his Shadow Chancellor, John McDonnell, with his vision of "*socialism with an iPad*" (20th November 2015). This is neither a "*new politics*" nor a "*new economics*" but a re-hash of Harold Wilson's "*White Heat of Technology*" speech of 52 years ago. Wilson's policy was an utter failure; there was no national scientific and technological renewal GUARDIAN September 19th 2013)

So the difference between a socialist and non-socialist is the difference between wanting to abolish capitalism and to keep it. And Corbyn falls into the latter category. A socialist he is not. So if Corbyn is not a socialist what is he? Corbyn, put simply, is a

reformist in as much as he has no intention of bringing about revolutionary socialist change. Corbyn thinks within the capitalist box and is quite happy to stay there.

Corbyn's social reform menu was stated at the last election, during the hustlings when he was standing for the Labour Party leadership contest and when he assumed leadership of the Labour Party in September 2015.

Here is a taste of his reform menu: a state controlled NHS with no private sector input; the end to privatisation, a "*people's Bank*"; nationalisation of the railways and postal services; rent control and security of tenancy; and the expansion of social housing. The list goes on and on as it would with any social reformer. But it is a menu that is offered to whet the appetite of a non-socialist electorate. These reforms might be carrying a criticism of capitalism and the vast wealth owned by the capitalist class but they will not resolve the urgent problems facing the working class.

The use of social reforms plays an insidious and reactionary political role in the defence of capitalism. Whenever a sound socialist critique is made against a particular problem caused by capitalism, a social reformer will come along and insert a social reform between the capitalist problem and the socialist solution.

Socialists, for example, have long argued that only the establishment of socialism will provide the best housing for everyone. Corbyn does not want capitalism abolished so, instead, he proposes "*240,000 social houses*" to be built if a Labour government is elected; not the best housing but ones stamped with the words "*second best*". "*Social housing*" is only a mealy-mouthed way of referring to working class housing. He does not want workers to live in the type of housing found in the pages of COUNTRY LIFE.

Corbyn calls for a "*fair and equitable society*" but it is a hollow cry, undeliverable in a class divided society where the means of production are used for the purpose of making profits not for meeting human needs. Only socialism, a social system without capitalism and the capitalist class can deliver a world of abundance.

The belief that capitalism can be reformed into a fair and equitable society has a long history. However policies to make capitalism more egalitarian will always flounder when imposed upon a social system based on the private ownership of the means of production and distribution.

Social reforms initiated by well-meaning politicians to meet real social needs fail because they conflict with the overriding principle of capital accumulation and the profit motive. The interests and needs of the capitalist class dominate capitalism and capitalist politics not the needs and interests of the working class. Social reforms are also subject to the vagaries of the economic cycle where social reforms enacted during an economic boom are watered down or repealed in an economic depression.

Socialists have neither advocated a policy of social reformism nor do we advocate reforms as a bridge to socialism. Socialism cannot be reached by a series of reforms; it can only be achieved by the formation of a socialist majority understanding and wanting a world of free access to what people need to live creative and decent lives. All reform programmes have the effect of side-tracking workers away from working for socialism.

And here lies the real difference between socialists and the Labour Party led by Jeremy Corbyn. A socialist party cannot entertain advocating social reforms because it would attract non-socialists to the socialist party who are more interested in the social reforms than in wanting to establish socialism. Corbyn rejects this key socialist principle. His Party uses social reforms to attract non-socialist voters in competition with other capitalist parties. To call this socialism is the politics of deceit.

However, it is a policy that has a long history of failure. Just pick up any history book and consider those numerous social reforms which were enacted to solve the problems facing the working class. Two hundred years of social reforms and the problems facing workers still persist from one generation to the next: poverty, poor housing, second-rate health care and schooling, unemployment and social alienation. In offering workers social reforms rather than socialism, the continued misery of capitalism is all Jeremy Corbyn can offer the working class.

THE JUNIOR DOCTOR'S STRIKE

The recent junior doctor's strike has demonstrated how workers who are not directly concerned with production, find they are handicapped in their industrial action by their indirect connection with the productive process. Although their strikes can cause great public inconvenience, such as cancellation of non-emergency operations, it is the effect on trade and profit that ultimately determines the length of the strike and the success of the strike weapon. The Government will often be prepared to resist indefinitely, and use all the propaganda channels available to create a climate of public hostility against the striking doctors. In the end, Jeremy Hunt, the Secretary of State for Health, just imposed the new contract on the junior doctors even though it would lead to resignations. Each year, more medical students graduate as doctors and will just have to accept the new conditions.

While it is capitalism itself which limits what trade union action can achieve, some loss of effectiveness also arises from the way in which historically, unions have come to be organised. Often the workers employed by a particular company and the workers in an industry are organised on occupational lines, in separate unions. This has the result that wage claims and strikes can fail to make maximum impact because not all unions are involved in the strike.

What, then, can be said about the potentialities and limitations of trade union action ? Something Marx wrote about it is as true now as it was over a hundred years ago

The working class ought not to exaggerate to themselves the ultimate working of these everyday struggles. They ought not to forget that they are fighting with effects...that they are applying palliatives, not curing the malady

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CAPITALISM: THE BEST OF ALL POSSIBLE WORLDS?

All for the best?

The German philosopher and mathematician, Gottfried Leibnitz thought that the way things were arranged in society was the best of all possible worlds. He coined the term “*best of all worlds*” in his 1710 work *Théodicée* (Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil). Leibnitz’s doctrine was ridiculed in the form of Dr. Pangloss, by Voltaire in his novel *Candide*. Dr. Pangloss teaches his pupil, Candide, the doctrine that “*all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds*” but undergoes increasing misfortune, undercutting his shallow optimism about the world as he finds it.

Leibnitz was not stupid as to argue that there were no bad things in the world but he believed there was nothing you could do about it. His view of the world was conservative allowing no change and no alternative social arrangement. In this he could be considered as the intellectual source for the conservative doctrines: “*there is no alternative*”, “*there is no practical alternative to the market*” and “*capitalism is the best of all possible worlds*”.

These dogmas are constantly chanted out by conservative politicians like the late Lady Thatcher, Tony Blair and David Cameron. To the thinking of the conservative mind, any alternative social arrangement to capitalism is a pie in the sky fantasy or just wishful thinking.

Even if a mathematical model or an algorithm could be produced to demonstrate beyond a shadow of doubt that socialism was a practical and viable alternative to a social system based on commodity production and exchange for profit, it would cut no ice with the free market fanatic. There is nothing a socialist could say or do to change their mind. Conservatism: the highest form of ignorance and the lowest form of thought.

Economic Panglossians

The economic Panglossians are not disinterested scientists but apologists for a capitalist class “*who possess but do not produce*”. There is nothing which could ever persuade these economists that the market is not benign; that there cannot be infinite growth without social and environmental consequences and that the actions of the “*butcher, the brewer and the baker*” can and do lead to catastrophic consequences.

Here, from an article on food adulteration in the nineteenth, is the reality of Adam Smith’s harmonious market order set out in his *WEALTH OF NATIONS* up until the Sale and Food Act of 1875:

Some of the commonly used additives in the 19th century were poisonous. To whiten bread, for example, bakers sometimes added alum... and chalk to the flour, while mashed potatoes, plaster of Paris (calcium sulphate), pipe clay and even sawdust could be added to increase the weight of their loaves. Rye flour or dried powdered beans could be used to replace wheat flour and the sour taste of stale flour could be disguised with ammonium carbonate. Brewers too, often added mixtures of bitter substances, some containing poisons like strychnine, to 'improve' the taste of the beer and save on the cost of hops ... By the beginning of the 19th century the use of such substances in manufactured foods and drinks was so common that town dwellers had begun to develop a taste for adulterated foods and drinks; white bread and bitter beer were in great demand.

The dogmatic conservatism, which denies the socialist alternative – the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society - to the profit system, is fanaticism to the extreme. Unfortunately for the fanatic, there is a problem. The fanatic is always carrying a secret doubt.

The free market economists deny there is a problem with capitalism and inequality even though the 62 richest people now own more wealth than half of the world's population, including the \$47 trillion hidden away in off-shore tax havens. For the rich, capitalism can only get better.

Economists are the latter-day Panglossians. They hold the a Panglossian belief that capitalism has exponential growth as the normal state of affairs, in spite of recurring crises, cyclical depressions and environmental consequences of capitalist production. Their economic text books and mathematical equations say that capitalism will exist forever because it is a rational, harmonious and self-adjusting social system. It cannot be questioned unless by a madman.

The Mistakes Economists Make

In a paper “THE MISTAKES ECONOMISTS MAKE” (September 2009), the environmentalist, Dave Cohen, asked why this world of buying and selling of commodities for profit is not to be questioned. He said that the economic Panglossians base their world view on a fundamental error. They assume that:

...markets, a human invention, are like God – omnipotent (all powerful), omnipresent (always present) and omniscient (all knowing)...It follows that markets assure ongoing and orderly progress...to provide greater and greater comfort to more and more people...(resilience.org)

But the markets did fail. Although, in typical Panglossian fashion, no economist has ever stood-up to criticise the functioning of the market and its negative outcomes and failures. When did you ever hear of a theologian criticise God?

So, an integrated and market driven capitalism is better for everyone, so say the Panglossians, despite the evidence to the contrary. Like a heroin addict the free market economist wants a purer and purer capitalism; an Ann Randian utopia of markets without governments. The purer the heroin the quicker it kills the addict.

And as an example of someone who is confident that we are living in the best of all possible worlds we need look no further than the Nobel Prize winner and professor of economics at Princeton University, Angus Deaton.

The professor claims all is well in capitalism. He claims he is an expert on world poverty patterns in domestic households. He even provides statistical models by which to measure poverty. Apparently we have never had it so good. As one commentator recently said of the Professor:

Deaton's central message is deeply positive, almost gloriously so. By the most meaningful measures — how long we live, how healthy and happy we are, how much we know — life has never been better. Just as important, it is continuing to improve
(<http://uk.businessinsider.com/who-is-angus-deaton-2015-nobel-prize-in-economics-winner-2015-10>)

For over 35 years the ruling economic orthodoxy in most universities across the globe has been “*red in tooth and claw*” economic liberalism, celebrating the market and the rich. One argument they use to show the philanthropic magnificence and generosity of the capitalist class is the “trickle- down” theory of economics which purports to show that as a by-product of the rich becoming richer and richer is that the poor also benefit by becoming richer too; a rising tide lifts all boats, so to speak.

The reality of course is altogether different. A report by five IMF economists, published in June 2015, dismissed “*trickle-down*” economics as a fallacious economic doctrine. Many boats, through ill-repair, just sink.
<http://www.theguardian.com/business/2015/jun/15/focus-on-low-income-families-to-boost-economic-growth-says-imf-study>

Flash Mobs and Economists

Any criticism against capitalism as the best of all possible worlds is immediately attacked by a flash mob of economists and economic journalists. When Thomas Piketty published his book, CAPITAL IN THE 21ST CENTURY, there were hundreds of papers instantly published on-line on blogs and free market web sites by economists claiming that his statistics were wrong, and rather than capitalism become more unequal the reverse was true. Capitalism can never be blamed. It is a secular heresy.

This does not mean Piketty's book has not got serious flaws. It has. Like the Panglossians he does not want capitalism abolished. He is obsessed by the capitalist dynamic in "*creating wealth*". Instead he wants the profit system to be made more "*fair*" and "*equitable*" through taxing the rich and giving to the poor; a failed Robin Hood politics of the social reformer.

We even had Bono of U2, the multi-millionaire rock-star, telling us that capitalism was eradicating poverty the world over; that capitalism was a force for good. Bono is capitalism's new market missionary off to the continent of Africa on behalf of his corporate and colonialist chums in the multi-nationals and neo-con think tanks. He told an audience at a lecture in Georgetown University that:

"capitalism took more people out of poverty than aid" (GUARDIAN 13th August 2013).

What he should have said is that capitalism causes poverty and government Aid will not solve the problem. If Bono had censured capitalism then he would not have received such a warm embrace from FORBES magazine and the hundreds of free market web sites found throughout the world.

The free market fanatics all meet at Davos and have a jolly good time. Nothing could ever be said to dampen their optimism about capitalism. There, on unlimited expenses, they do enjoy the best of all possible worlds. Or do they?

In CANDIDE, Dr Pangloss walks through the best of all possible worlds while contracting syphilis, losing an eye and an ear, encountering two volcanos before being partially hanged in a bodged execution and finally enslaved. If the economists, with their perfect market order showing capitalism to be the best of all possible worlds, do not personally suffer from their misguided optimism, the same cannot be said for the world around them; economic chaos and crises, mass unemployment, enforced migration for millions, war, state and private terrorism, the exploitation of the 99% by the 1%, abject poverty, death and destruction.

Unlike Dr. Pangloss, the worse that can befall the economists preaching their market utopia at Davos over fine wine and Michelin star food is to be buried under an avalanche of snow. They would not be missed.

Socialism or Reformism?

Of course, the standard reformist argument, put forward by the Pope, Piketty, Oxfam *et al*, against this Panglossian world view is that there should be state intervention to distribute wealth from the rich to the poor. Who will do it? Where are the political parties who support this type of intervention? The social democratic parties are all signed up to economic liberalism and the religion of the market. What of Labour's Messiah, Jeremy Corbyn? He has more chances of walking on water than of making an impact against international capital and its institutions.

Even if political candidates were to step forward and were prepared to force through redistribution policies as advocated by Oxfam and Piketty what would be the consequence? Not a lot. As Marx said, how can you have a fair and equitable distribution of wealth in a society based on the private ownership of the means of production and distribution?

Marx's solution, one which socialists agree with, is for the working class to abolish capitalism. That is how you end poverty and that is how you deal with the Panglossians

THE 1916 DUBLIN EASTER UP-RISING

This year marks the centenary of the Easter Rising in Dublin. In an article in THE INDEPENDENT, Robert Fisk asked the pertinent question "*What Irish Revolution: What Independence?*" (January 20th 2016). This is what he wrote:

The first paragraph of the Easter declaration was a political winner – until you started thinking about it. "In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood," it said. "Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom." The problem lay in the expression "through us" – not because the Irish signatories doubted it, but because no one had elected them to stage this romantic, bloody and ultimately hopeless military operation against the British on behalf of the "sovereign independent state" which they had declared. Unlike the constitutionalist O'Connell, whose Irish emancipation was achieved through the British parliament 87 years earlier, the Easter Rising was more of a "putsch" than a revolution, an attempted coup that had absolutely no democratic credentials."

The uprising was not revolutionary in the Marxist sense of the word, nor was it democratic. The consequence was the setting up of a capitalist state which went on to join the European Union. The working class in Ireland, hemmed in by the twin barriers of

nationalism and religion, has found itself imprisoned in a capitalist system which exploits them, renders them unemployed when not profitable to employ and forces workers to form into trade unions and strike for higher pay and better working conditions. The working class in Ireland do not live in a “*democracy*” where the means of production and distribution are commonly owned. Far from it. Workers, there as elsewhere in the world, are nothing more than wage slaves. When the celebrations start this Easter it will be the Irish State representing the Irish capitalist class who will be the winners. Those shot by the failed up-rising, including James Connolly, bought socialism no nearer. In fact, their actions only helped to retard it.

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WHY PRESIDENT TRUMP?

Will Donald Trump make it all the way to the presidency? And why the support for a campaign based on hate, fear and conspiracy theories? Why, in particular, do so many working-class Americans fall for his racist, bombastic, bullyboy ranting?

Trump has started off badly despite the apparent support he has received, losing the first caucus in Iowa. However there is a long way to go in this political pantomime where all the main characters are villains; a collection of Captain Hook’s, Evil Queens and King Rats.

US governments have pursued a policy of expanding their Free Trade Zones for some decades now, driven by the ‘*free trade*’ dogma which claims that the free flow of capital and labour creates the most efficient economic conditions for creating wealth and prosperity. They first expanded to include Mexico as part of the Zone with no border tariffs. The result, as predicted by the trade unions, was that many manufacturers closed down their US plants and moved to south of the border where they were free of trade union “*restrictive agreements*”, health and safety regulations, and US taxes and of course labour rates were cheaper!

In an article in NEW POLITICS (winter 2010, Vol: XII – 4), an academic, Dan La Botz wrote of the decline of the industrial worker in the US:

The industrial worker core had been declining for some time, a result of both new technology and offshoring, and now its decline became precipitous. The statistics tell the story. In 1960 out of a total non-farm workforce of 54,274,000, there were 15,687,000 manufacturing workers representing 29 percent of the total. By 2009 out of a total of 134,333,000 non-farm workers, there were only 12,640,000 manufacturing, representing just 9 percent of the total. That is, manufacturing workers fell in the last fifty years from almost one-third of all workers to less than 10 percent

And he went on to say:

Manufacturing workers, especially those in heavy industries such as steel, auto, rubber, glass, and electrical industries, had been among the most highly unionized workers in the country. Such industrial workers often had higher wages than other workers such as those in professions like teaching, in health care, or in services. The industrial shakeouts and manufacturing relocation to the South or offshore devastated the unions, reducing union density and weakening union power. In 1973, 38.8 percent of manufacturing workers were in unions; by 1979 that percentage had fallen to 32.3; by 1990 it was only 20.6 percent; and by 1995 just 17.6 percent (<http://newpolitics.mayfirst.org/fromthearchives?nid=179>)

Twenty years later the Bureau of Labour Statistics gave the figure of 9.7% as the number of manufacturing workers in unions. Organised labour declined and so did the number of days lost due to strikes. Employers told workers either to take wage cuts or the firms would re-locate abroad (<http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/union2.pdf>).

Another result – the law of unintended consequences - was that towns and cities across the US were hit by massive unemployment and the ruin of the local economy. Shops and so on closed down as their customers either moved away or if stuck and living on ‘*welfare/dole*’ money, had very little by way of spending money. At the same time local councils lost a lot of revenue due to the closure of so many businesses and the loss of a lot of their population base. During the last economic depression some unemployed workers were forced to live in cars and vans and to create tent cities not seen since the 1930’s.

All these factors have contributed to the disaster in towns like Flint after General Motors and other car companies moved away. Later manufacturers moved their operations to other countries, mainly Asia, always looking for where labour costs were lowest.

A similar process has taken place in the UK. Northern textile manufacturers closed down their plants and exported their machinery to new businesses in various Asian countries. These companies moved again and again to wherever labour was cheapest, never staying put very long it seemed.

That also worked in another direction: foreign firms were encouraged to set up in depressed areas of the UK - e.g. Mittal, Tata, Japanese car firms, and in Northern Ireland De Lorean cars - bribed with Treasury sweetheart deals such as tax holiday agreements. Likewise in Eire, where Dublin was so attractive to many multinationals, looking for offshore tax havens for their Treasury operations, and so a huge financial services industry grew up in that part of Dublin.

The whole '*globalization*' issue was driven by capitalists determined to hunt out the cheapest possible labour costs, driving down labour rates and union demands by force of competition: London workers are now competing with workers in Dacca, Burma, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines and China. The downward pressure on wage rates is partly due to historic differences in the cost of living and in living standards, but also there is the huge amount of new labour entering the labour market as so many Chinese peasants have entered the labour market in great numbers.

Is protectionism the answer as Trump asserts or uses as political rhetoric to gain working class support? Protection is in effect the state support of one industry at the expense of those who pay for the whole cost of administration, that is the capitalist class. Protection by way of tariffs or subsidies cannot in the long-run overcome the world conditions governing the whole mass of a country's trade, nor would it improve the position of the working class. Neither free trade nor protectionism can meet the interest of the working class. They are just two sides of the same capitalist coin.

Unemployment is a world-wide phenomenon and can only be understood in the context of capitalism, the trade cycle, capitalist competition and the world market. And it is a social system driven by a class struggle between those who own the means of production and distribution and those who do not. The problem for the working class is that there is a vast pool of workers, skilled and unskilled; the capitalist class can tap into. Class power allows capitalist to do this; to hire when it is profitable and to fire when it is not; to import cheap labour or go where cheap labour exists.

The working class is a world-wide working class lacking in socialist understanding and prey to snake-oil politicians like Trump. He would not be able to solve the problems facing the US working class any more than Clinton or Obama or any number of Bushes could. Workers have to show class solidarity and recognise that only the establishment of socialism will solve the problems they face. Workers have the numbers, and the conscious and political means to take power away from the capitalist class. Socialism should be the answer to the Trump's, Sanders and Clintons of this world.

Avoid Leaders

Socialists do not have leaders. There is no one doing the thinking for us. We do not have professors at university producing theory for us to follow. Nor do we have politicians telling us what to think and what to do. We do the thinking and organising for ourselves. Socialists are free from the cult of leadership. We look up to no-one. We do not clap at a leader's speech nor do wave flags. We do not cheer speeches and wait to be told what to do. Socialists do none of these things. If we were asked to take someone to our leader we would have to decline their request because we have nobody to lead. Socialists do not need leaders. Socialists think for themselves. We stand on our own two feet. We avoid leaders and so should the working class. Following leaders only leads to un-marked graves in military cemeteries or disillusionment with a failed capitalist politics.

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CAPITALISM: A FETTER ON PRODUCTION

Capitalism as a fetter on production

Marx described capitalism as “”. He made this point in two early works: THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO (1848) and in A CONTRIBUTION TO A CRITIQUE OF POLITICAL ECONOMY (1859). He wrote:

The productive forces at the disposal of society no longer tend to further the development of the conditions of bourgeois property; on the contrary, they have become too powerful for these conditions, by which they are fettered, and so soon as they overcome these fetters, they bring disorder into the whole of bourgeois society (THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO AND THE LAST HUNDRED YEARS, Socialist Party of Great Britain, 1948 p. 66-67)

And

At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or – this merely expresses the same thing in legal terms – with the property relations within the framework of which

they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters (A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, Preface Lawrence and Wishart p. 21)

Marx also made the same point right at the end of the first volume of CAPITAL where, again, he wrote of “*capital*” becoming “...*a fetter upon the mode of production which has flourished alongside and under it*” (Chapter 32, THE HISTORICAL TENDENCY OF CAPITAL ACCUMULATION, p. 929).

Capitalism and the capital-labour relationship between the capitalist and working class prevents the productive forces, including human labour, from being used to directly meet human need. Production just cannot be used to produce goods and services as and where they are needed. What stand in the way are class relations where the means of production and distribution are owned by a capitalist class for the purpose of making a profit and accumulating capital.

Capitalism restricts production and distribution to effective market demand with devastating consequences for those who do not have the wherewithal to buy commodities necessary to live. No more so than in the case of the millions of people suffering from chronic malnourishment around the world. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (UNFAO), for example, estimates that about 795 million people out of the 7.3 billion people in the world, (about one in nine persons), were suffering from chronic undernourishment between 2014 and 2016. Almost all those in hunger, some 780 million people, live in developing capitalist countries, representing 12.9 per cent of the population. There are also 11 million people undernourished in developed capitalist countries
(http://www.worldhunger.org/articles/Learn/world%20hunger%20facts%202002.htm#Number_of_hungry_people_in_the_world)

In socialism, production would be used just to meet people’s needs for housing, health, education, transport, communication food, clean water and sanitation so that men and women could participate in the affairs of society and live worthwhile and creative lives. The establishment of the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society would remove unnecessary world hunger by allowing society to produce without the restriction imposed by the market and the profit motive on the use of technology and industry.

Scarcity will not be a problem for socialism because scarcity under capitalism is social not natural; a feature of class relations. Although a future socialist society will have to deal with many problems bequeathed by capitalism, particularly in its early years, the basis for solving hunger outside commercial farming and the market is already there. According to Eric Gimenez of the Institute for Food and Development Policy, capitalism already grows enough food for 10 billion people even though hunger still persists. He wrote:

Hunger is caused by poverty and inequality, not scarcity. For the past two decades, the rate of global food production has increased faster than the rate of global population growth. The world already produces more than 1 ½ times enough food to feed everyone on the planet. That's enough to feed 10 billion people, the population peak we expect by 2050. But the people making less than \$2 a day -- most of whom are resource-poor farmers cultivating unviably small plots of land -- can't afford to buy this food.

In reality, the bulk of industrially-produced grain crops goes to biofuels and confined animal feedlots rather than food for the 1 billion hungry. The call to double food production by 2050 only applies if we continue to prioritize the growing population of livestock and automobiles over hungry people. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/eric-holt-gimenez/world-hunger_b_1463429.html

Poverty and hunger would not exist in socialism. Socialism would produce food in abundance within the framework of the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society. Socialism will release co-operative and social labour to produce food just to meet human need. The barrier is capitalism and the class relations found in capitalism. The barrier to producing enough food to feed the world also comes out of powerful capitalist ideas protecting the power and privilege of the employing class. These barrier are not insurmountable but do require conscious, democratic and political action of a socialist majority to realise “*from each according to ability to each according to need*”

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MARX, MALTHUS AND THE POLITICS OF POPULATION

One of the persistent barriers to the free dissemination of socialist ideas is the belief that poverty is a “*natural*” condition of the human species and derives from the rate of population growth outstripping food production. This view was first put forward by

the Reverend Thomas Malthus in his ESSAY ON THE PRINCIPLE OF POPULATION AS IT AFFECTS THE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT OF SOCIETY, first published in 1798.

Malthus was a political economist publishing PRINCIPLE OF POLITICAL ECONOMY in 1820. Although he took Holy Orders he spent much of his time teaching the History and Political Economy at the East India Company College at Ware in Hertfordshire.

Malthus's theory of population is the application of supply and demand applied to the relationships between food production and population growth. He claimed to show that population growth always tended to outstrip the growth in food supply and could only be checked by famine, disease and war. He concluded that any social reform to improve the conditions of the poor would only result in more mouths to feed, causing food to become more expensive thereby creating greater poverty than before.

Malthus's argument is that human nature leads to an unchecked birthrate and if unchecked would double itself every quarter of a century. He wrote:

...population, when unchecked, increases at a geometrical ratio. Subsistence increases only in an arithmetical ratio (Chapter 2 1798 edition)

And he concluded:

Taking the population of the world at any number, a thousand millions, for instance, the human species would increase in the ratio of--1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128, 256, 512, &c. and subsistence as--1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 &c. In two centuries and a quarter, the population would be to the means of subsistence as 512 to 10: in three centuries as 4096 to 13, and in two thousand years the difference would be almost incalculable, though the produce in that time would have increased to an immense extent

Marx was highly critical of Malthus. In CAPITAL, for example he said that the publication of Malthus's Essay had caused "a great sensation", but this:

...was due solely to the fact that it corresponded to the interests of a particular party. The French Revolution had found passionate defenders in the United Kingdom; the "principle of population, slowly worked out in the eighteenth century, and then, in the midst of a great social crisis, proclaimed with drums and trumpets as the infallible antidote to the doctrines of Condorcet, etc., was greeted jubilantly by the English oligarchy as the great destroyer of all hankerings after a progressive development of humanity (CAPITAL VOLUME 1 Chapter 25 footnote 6 Chapter 25 pp 766. Penguin 1998)

Marx showed that there was no general theory of population applicable to all social systems:

This is a law of population peculiar to the capitalist mode of production; and in fact every particular mode of production has its own special laws of population, which are historically valid within that particular sphere. An abstract law of population exists only for plants and animals and even then only in the absence of any historical intervention by man (Capital, Volume 1, Chapter 25 The General Law of Capital Accumulation, pp 783-784)

What was taken to being overpopulation and hunger was in effect unemployment caused by the periodic trade cycle which was a peculiar feature of capitalism. Marx showed that capitalism created an industrial reserve army of the unemployed which increased in a trade depression and fell in better economic conditions. This cyclical process had nothing to do with the birth rate but everything to do with the economic laws acting upon commodity production and exchange for profit (see CAPITAL VOLUME 1, Chapter 25, *The General Law of Capitalist Accumulation*, 762 - 870).

In the long run it was changes within capitalism itself that refuted Malthus. Greater productivity in farming through the introduction of new industrial techniques not only brought down the price of food but kept it in line with an increasing urban population. The other factor was the increasing propagation and use of available and discreet contraception from the mid to late 19th century, with the industrial manufacture of rubber condoms by Goodyear and Hancock and the first commercial vaginal suppository invented by Walter Rendell, an English pharmacist in 1885 both contributing to a reduction in the rate of childbirth. Ironically it was the eugenicists, like Marie Stopes, who, at the turn of the 20th century seized upon the advantages of the wider use of contraception as a means to stop the poor breeding.

Malthusian population theory has a class bias running through its propaganda. By focusing upon population class ownership of the means of production and distribution is ignored. There is silence on the vast wealth going to a minority class of capitalists. Nothing is said of the waste associated with capitalism like arms production, commerce, advertising and government. Instead the poor and destitute are an easy target. Blame African farmers, blame large families in the Middle East, just like Malthus blamed the working class in his own time.

Socialists, contrary to Malthusian theory, do not believe that the human population will die out because of lack of resources. Scarcity under capitalism is not a natural phenomenon but a social one. Food production is a variable based on the type of social existence in place. As Marx showed, the forces of production, including human labour, are held back by the social relations of production. The class monopoly of the means of production and distribution by a minority of society to the exclusion of the majority is the problem not the rate of population growth.

Population control and neo-Malthusianism

Although modern-day supporters of Malthus no longer use his ideas to defend their case for population control, they still persist in believing that the number of people on the planet must always increase faster than the supply of food. They draw an erroneous conclusion by concentrating on ways to reduce the rate of population growth instead of asking why food production could not be increased to meet a growing demand for food. The capitalist cause of poverty is left unquestioned. Instead the rate of population growth is seen as the problem.

One group of neo-Malthusians goes by the name of Population Matters. Population Matters is celebrating the 250th anniversary of Malthus's birth with dire warnings of the effects of population growth and climate change on food production. It warns:

Our findings show that population growth, the depletion of natural resources and the increase in extreme weather events are increasing the risk of crop failure, and thus food insecurity.

Population Matters website displays a “world population clock” showing the number of human beings on the planet at any given time, ticking away towards some ecological apocalypse (<http://www.populationmatters.org/>).

Population Matters is a political pressure group trying to persuade politicians to produce and enact legislation to reduce the world's population. It argues that Governments and business leaders:

...should acknowledge that, along with consumption growth and industrial practices, population growth increases damage to the environment.

And to underscore the appeal to the profit instincts of business leaders Population Matters states:

We need to recognize that slowing population growth is one of the most cost-effective and reliable ways of easing pressure on our environment and securing a sustainable future for us all.

As with all pressure groups in capitalism, Population Matters propose a series of reforms: tax incentives for not having children, free contraception and restricting immigration. The pressure group has its star advocates like Paul Ehrlich, Jonathan Porritt and David Attenborough with direct access to the media and politicians. It appears to be well funded and supported. The Labour Government under Gordon Brown employed Jonathan Porritt as an advisor, although what advice he gave we were never told.

Reading the policy pronouncements of the membership of Population Matters on the question of population control require a strong stomach. Jonathan Porritt, in typical neo-Malthusian style, wants families in developing countries to be restricted to three children claiming “*Continuing population growth in this region makes periodic famine unavoidable*”. Porritt went on to say that it was a waste of money trying to save starving children today because they: “*will be back again in similar feeding centres with their own children in a few years' time.*” (<http://www.jonathonporritt.com/blog/who-would-have-thought-it-population-growth-and-famine-would-appear-be-linked>)

David Attenborough also gives his considered view of the families reportedly starving in Ethiopia:

What are all these famines in Ethiopia, what are they about? They're about too many people for too little land. That's what it's about. And we are blinding ourselves. We say, get the United Nations to send them bags of flour. That's barmy (Guardian 18th September 2013)

David Attenborough believes that if society does not impose a population limit then “*nature will*”. However, as the GUARDIAN noted, the last famine took place in Somalia between October 2010 and April 2012 and the deaths were attributable to the politics and civil war taking place there and the onerous conditions put on food aid reaching those who needed it. Of course, it is easy for the likes of David Attenborough to blame the poor for being poor, but so much harder for him and other population theorists to understand the type of capitalist society in which we live and the problems which commodity production and exchange for profit causes.

And then there is Paul Ehrlich. In the 1970's he wrote the best seller THE POLULATION BOMB, - over 2 million copies were sold at the time - in which he wrote:

We must have population control at home, hopefully through changes in our value system, but by compulsion if voluntary methods fail (Prologue x1 – xii)

Ehrlich advocated ending US food aid to developing capitalist countries, government-imposed population control and enforced sterilization of fathers of three or more children in India (p. 151). Ehrlich now accepts his prediction of widespread famine in the 1970s underestimated the "*green revolution*" where per-acre yield avoided the mass famine he predicted. But, in an interview with the journalist Juliette Jowitt: "*he still dismisses hope that technology will allow mankind to stretch resources ever further*" (GUARDIAN 23rd October 2013).

However the error made by population control advocates is that they persist in seeing a correlation between the rate of population growth and the rate of food production without placing both factors within the context of a capitalist social system where the means of production and distribution are owned by a minority class to the exclusion of the majority. Level of food production is a question of class and class ownership of the means of production, not nature.

Food production under capitalism is restricted by the profit motive. The profit motive curtails industrial food production despite unmet need and starvation. Only buying customers; those that can afford to pay for food, count. Food production is deliberately "*fettered*" – deliberately restrained - by capitalism. Capitalism has the potential to increase food supply and to feed the entire planet's population. However the profit system will only produce food within the restrictive market mechanism of commodity production and exchange for profit even if this means mass starvation and millions of people living in poverty.

In conclusion, capitalism, not the rate of human population growth, is responsible for the starvation and death of millions of men, women and children around the world. The technology available to society could be used to avoid famine and to feed the world. Capitalism's waste is also applicable to food. As a recent Institute of Mechanical Engineer's report on food waste noted:

Today, we produce about four billion metric tonnes of food per annum. Yet due to poor practices in harvesting, storage and transportation, as well as market and consumer wastage, it is estimated that 30–50% (or 1.2–2 billion tonnes) of all food produced never reaches a human stomach... (T)his figure does not reflect the fact that large amounts of land, energy, fertilisers and water have also been lost in the production of foodstuffs which simply end up as waste. This level of wastage is a tragedy that cannot continue if we are to succeed in the challenge of sustainably meeting our future food demands
(<http://www.imeche.org/knowledge/themes/environment/global-food>)

The one overriding factor that prevents technology being used to feed the world's population adequately is the private ownership of the means of production and distribution. Capitalism deliberately underproduces; it "fetters production". Abolish capitalism and you abolish poverty and hunger. Socialism is the only social system that can provide sustainable production that minimises waste and provides directly to meet human need.

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IS ANOTHER ECONOMIC CRISIS COMING?

Is capitalism heading towards another economic crisis? The media are full of stories of impending gloom and despondency. The stock markets have lost billions of pounds in value. The Chinese economy is contracting, falling oil and steel prices are leading to thousands of job losses and the Eurozone and the so-called Brics economies - Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, the nations that were set to reshape the world economy - are all struggling.

Writing in the DAILY TELEGRAPH, Jeremy Warner notes that the impact of oil and a contracting Chinese economy is having a profound effect on container shipping. He wrote:

Naively, shippers came to believe that Chinese-driven growth in international trade would go on forever, and bulked up accordingly. The dash for capacity has spawned a fleet of ever more monstrous vessels. Like Krakens from the deep, these newly built super-ships have hit the high seas just as the boom in trade begins to peter out (12. 02.16).

Why the surprise? For socialists the current economic crisis is not an aberration but a consequence of the economic laws that act on commodity production and exchange for profit. Economic crises, trade depressions and periodic high levels of unemployment

have been a feature of capitalism for over two hundred years. Despite unemployment falling in the UK there are still 1.68 million officially unemployed (BBC NEWS 20th January 2016)

There was an economic crisis as long ago as 1829. It was described by William Huskisson, a former President of the Board of Trade, in a letter he wrote on December 30th of that year:

I consider the country to be in a most unsatisfactory state, that some great convulsion must soon take place...I hear distress of all the agricultural, the manufactural, the commercial, the West Indian and all trading interests...that no merchant has a legitimate business...I am also told that the whole of London shop-keepers are nearly ruined (HUSKISSON PAPERS, pub. Constable, 1931, page 310).

There was another economic crisis described by Lord Randolph Churchill in a speech in 1884:

We are suffering from a depression of trade extending as far back as 1874, ten years of trade depression, and the most hopeful either among our capitalists or our artisans can discover no signs of revival...Turn your eyes where you will, survey any branch of British industry you like, you will find signs of mortal disease (LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL by Winston Churchill, M. P., pub. Macmillan & Co Ltd, London, 1906, Vol 1, page 291).

Randolph Churchill was right to be pessimistic, for the depression, known in textbooks as the great Depression; “*lasted for about twenty years*” (see “*Industrial Relations Handbook*” 1944, Page 4).

However, economic crises are not natural, like an earthquake or a volcano, but are economic and social. They are features of capitalism where production and distribution take place for profit and where the means of production are owned by a minority capitalist class to the exclusion of a working class majority.

Not that politicians and their economic advisors can do anything about preventing the trade cycle taking its course from economic crisis, to trade depression to up-turn and boom. They can’t.

Each generation claims to have produced a saviour of capitalism - a Lord Keynes, a Milton Friedman or a William Hutton, but they all have feet of clay. Their economic ideas do not stop trade crises occurring but they provide useful political propaganda for the capitalist class and their politicians. The “*saviours of capitalism*” turn attention away from the only solution for getting rid of economic crises and periodic high levels of unemployment; the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of socialism.

What then, is the cause of the economic crisis and the trade depression that follows? The crisis is the point at which the fast expansion of production during a boom suddenly stalls. Why does this happen?

The crisis is the point at which the fast expansion of commodity production during a boom suddenly stalls. Why does this happen? Marx dealt with it in CAPITAL VOLUME I, Chapter III, Section 2. A French economist, J. B. Say, had argued that a serious depression could not happen because “*every seller brings a buyer to the market*”.

By this Say meant that any capitalist who sells commodities thereby obtains money in payment for them and is then in a position to go out at once and buy other commodities thus keeping industry busy.

However, as Marx pointed out, “*...no one is forthwith bound to purchase because he has just sold*”.

He may choose not to do so, and if the interval between the sale and purchase is too great, the result is a “*crisis*”. So why should the capitalists, at some times, stop buying the commodities they had been buying, and leave them unsold in the market? It has to be remembered that the capitalist as capitalist does not just buy for his own consumption.

The capitalist buys raw materials and hires workers to turn these materials into finished products for the purpose of making a profit. If his particular market is swamped by overproduction, the prospect of profit vanishes and the capitalist then curbs production, and stands off workers, thus building up the depression.

This “*overproduction*” in particular markets is inevitable from time to time, one reason being that:

...the capitalist mode of production has a tendency to develop the productive forces absolutely –regardless of value, and of the surplus value contained in it and regardless of the social conditions under which capitalist production takes place (CAPITAL VOL III, Page 292)

Marx called this overproduction in particular markets “*disproportion*”. After making an assumption about the economy and

disregarding price fluctuations, sham transactions and speculation, he said that a crisis could only be explained:

“...as a result of a disproportion of production in various branches, and the disproportion of the consumption of the capitalists and the accumulation of their capitals” (CAPITAL, VOL. III Page 568)

Marx, after a long study of the development of industry in Britain, made a valuable summary of the cycle of boom and depression:

The life of modern industry becomes a series of periods of moderate activity, prosperity, overproduction, crisis and stagnation... Except in the periods of prosperity, there rages, between the capitalists the most furious conflict for the share of each in the market (CAPITAL, VOLUME 1. Kerr Edition, Page 495).

Marx's study of crises, developed across the three volumes of CAPITAL and in THEORIES OF SURPLUS VALUE, provides a valid account of the process of capital accumulation and the contradictions and problems that periodically occur. Marx showed the working class were exploited and had no interest in the retention of capitalism. The profit system could never be made to work in the interest of the workers. Nor did Marx believe capitalism would ever collapse. In THEORIES OF SURPLUS VALUE he wrote: *"there are no permanent crises"* (Volume 2, Part 2, p. 269).

For the working class there is no escape from the problems created by capitalism, like unemployment, except through a socialist revolution. And the socialist revolution is not dependent on an economic crisis. No matter where capitalism happens to be in the trade cycle the working class has no alternative but to consciously, democratically and politically organise to replace the profit system with socialism.

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KEY SOCIALIST PRINCIPLES

2016 sees the 25th anniversary of the reconstitution of the Socialist Party of Great Britain on the 15th June 1991. The SPGB was reconstituted following the expulsion of members of North West London and Camden Branches from the Clapham based Socialist Party around the issue of taking political action in the full name of the Party as set out in the original 1904 OBJECT and DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES.

The two branches set up the reconstituted Socialist Party of Great Britain on the basis of socialist principle particularly regarding the question of hostility to all other political parties that are not socialist, the question of the vote, socialist delegates, parliament and the conscious and political capture by the working class of the machinery of government, including the armed forces.

Over the coming five years we are going to take the opportunity to reproduce key articles from THE SOCIALIST STANDARD and SOCIALIST STUDIES which have dealt with the SPGB's unique position on the revolutionary use of the vote, Parliament and the State as well as new articles in the light of the current political crisis and loss of legitimacy facing the main capitalist political parties.

Other articles to be published will discuss the necessity of the formation of a world-wide socialist majority to gain control of political power before establishing the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society.

We will also be publishing articles relating to the SPGB's hostility clause regarding the relationship between socialists and anarchists, anarcho-communists, Situationists and other groups showing why there is no common ground between socialists and these organisations and why the later groups are utopian and have no practical means to realise their own political programme.

The first article we publish in this edition of SOCIALIST STUDIES is taken from THE SOCIALIST STANDARD, October, 1937 pp. 149 -150)

SOCIALISM AND THE STATE

We have received the following letter from a Southampton reader. Our reply follows:

Southampton

Dear Sir

Your Party is certainly uncompromising, but when Marx was studying the Paris Commune he discovered the fact that the State, with all its various offices, was not of the slightest use to the working class. In the Socialist Standard, July, 1937, reference is made there to Lewis Morgan; he, more than anyone, illustrates the fact that with a change in the tool, and the ownership thereof, there came a change in government old forms, old means of oppression; everything changed when the character of the tool changed. In our day, social methods of production are decaying under private ownership; the S.P.G.B. as I see, contend that the working class will govern, or be governed, as you will, by the political State; you obviously don't intend an industrial democracy based on the social mode of wealth production.

I can quote from Marx, Engels and De Leon, as proof of my ideas, and your movements' policy, to put it mild, dishonest or dumb. A revolutionary organisation holds a great deal of responsibility; do not avoid the facts

N. Jolliffe

Our correspondent thinks that Marx expressed certain views about the State, and that the S.P.G.B. holds other ideas, and that, therefore, we are dishonest or dumb. It would have been helpful if Mr. Jolliffe had been more explicit about the place in which Marx is supposed to have expressed these views, and that we are supposed to have opposed them, for actually both of these assertions are baseless.

But, before dealing with them, we would remind our correspondent in thinking he can prove any policy to be sound or unsound by quoting from "MARX, ENGELS AND DE LEON," or from Holy writ or anything else. All he can prove by quoting from Marx is that Marx held a certain view. As Marx was a careful, conscientious and very well-informed and experienced student of political and economic questions, his considered opinion is deserving of the fullest attention, not, however, to be accepted as gospel. Marx, like other people, had to learn by experience, and sometimes made mistakes. Even geniuses make mistakes.

However, on the question before us the only mistakes have been made by Mr. Jolliffe.

What Mr. Jolliffe believes Marx wrote after studying the Paris Commune is that:

The State, with all its various offices, was not of the slightest use to the working class.

What Marx really wrote was as different as chalk is from cheese. (The references are to "CIVIL WAR IN FRANCE," by Karl Marx; Labour Publishing Co. edition, 1921.)

Marx (p. 8) first quotes, with approval, the declaration of the Communists, that:

The proletarians of Paris...have understood that it is their imperious duty and their absolute right to render themselves masters of their own destinies, by seizing upon the government power.

Marx then adds his own comment:

But the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made State machinery, and wield it for its own purposes.

What Mr. Jolliffe has done (and many others before him) is to ignore the first statement about the duty of seizing upon the government power, ignore the word "*simply*," and ignore the later passages where Marx explains that having seized on the government power, the workers must amputate the "*merely repressive organs*," wrest its "*legitimate functions*" from the usurping authority, and restore the legitimate functions to the responsible agents of society (p.32).

Neither here nor anywhere else does Marx ever say that the State is "*not of the slightest use to the working class*".

As Mr Jolliffe has brought in Engels, it will be fitting to use Engels' own amplification of what Marx and he had in mind. In a letter to Van Patten, on April 18th, 1883 (i.e., immediately after Marx's death). Engels wrote as follows:

...The working class must first take possession of the organised political power of the State and by its aid crush the resistance of the capitalist class and organise society anew...This state may require very considerable alterations before it can fulfil its new functions.

Now if our correspondent will turn to our "DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES" he will find precisely the same idea in paragraph

Regarding the next statement in our correspondent's letter, concerning the supposed views of the S.P.G.B. as to the "*Political State*" under Socialism, we deny that he can find such a statement in any of our literature. The S.P.G.B. agrees with Marx and Engels that, with the disappearance of classes, there "*also disappears the necessity for the power of armed oppression or state power*". The State will, therefore, in due course "*wither away*"

State interference in social relations becomes, in one domain after another, superfluous, and then dies out of itself; the government of persons is replaced by the administration of things, and by the conduct of the process of production. The State is not "abolished", it dies out – (Engels' "SOCIALISM: UTOPIAN AND SCIENTIFIC". Chapter III).

SOCIALIST THEORY AND PRINCIPLES

The Socialist Party of Great Britain has made a number of unique contributions to socialist theory either clarifying or going beyond some of the theories of socialist pioneers like Marx and Engels. Here are seven of the contributions, in no particular order:

First, resolving the "Reform or Revolution?" question by declaring that a socialist party does not advocate reforms of capitalism.

Second, recognising that political democracy can be used for revolutionary ends.

Third, that socialism will be a world-wide social system without national boundaries or a federation of countries.

Fourth, the rejection of any need for a "transitional" period between capitalism and socialism. Production and distribution directly to meet human needs can be immediately undertaken by society once a socialist majority has established socialism

Fifth, the recognition that capitalism will not collapse of its own accord, but will continue from one economic crisis to the next until the working class consciously politically and democratically organises to abolish the profit system.

Sixth, opposing all wars under capitalism as not being fought in the interest of the working class. Furthermore, recognising that there were no "progressive wars" of freedom and liberation bringing socialism any closer.

And Seventh, the rejection of the political concept of leadership. The socialist revolution must involve the active and conscious participation of a majority of workers without the need for leaders no matter how well meaning.

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THE SOCIALIST POSITION ON ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

The working class has to be united with a common political purpose and means to establish socialism. The working class does not only need to be united within one country but it has to be united between countries. At a fundamental level, a world working class confronts a world capitalist class over the ownership of the means of production and distribution.

Workers who conflate their interests with those of the capitalist class create an artificial barrier to the establishment of socialism. No more so than in the continuing conflict between Israel and Palestine and the factional division between workers living in these two states. The problem is further compounded by workers elsewhere in the world taking sides.

The creation of Israel in 1948, shortly after the Second World War, has led to continuous war, the grabbing of territory, tens of thousands of deaths, displacement and violent resentment. The imposition of a pro-Western state in a semi-feudal region of the Near East has benefited the US and Europe by providing a sphere of strategic importance. In Israel it has created a powerful pro-Western capitalist state.

In a paper published by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy the importance of Israel to the United States was clearly described by Lee Smith in THE TABLET:

The paper offers chapters and verse on Israeli contributions to the U.S. national interest. They include: Israeli counter-proliferation efforts, such as the 1981 bombing of Iraq's Osirak nuclear facility and the 2007 attack on Syria's secret nuclear facility at al-Kibar; joint military training exercises, as well as exchanges on military doctrine; Israeli technology, like unmanned aerial systems, armoured vehicle protection, defense against short-range rocket threats, and robotics; missile defense cooperation; counterterrorism and intelligence cooperation; and cyber defense. Blackwill and Slocombe conclude that the alliance is in fact so central to U.S. national interests that U.S. policymakers should find ways to further enhance cooperation with Jerusalem (November 9th 2011).

However for the working class in the region it has meant nothing but pain and insecurity. There are, for example, 2 million Palestinian refugees in Jordan and a further 500,000 in Lebanon (United Nations Relief and Work agency). Most Palestinians live in poverty.

War and Conflict: From one Generation to the Next

The origins of the conflict between Israel and Palestine date back to the Balfour Declaration in 1917, and the creation of the British Mandate of Palestine in 1920. The Israeli state was born out of a conflict between the British authorities and Jewish resistance groups from 1944 lasting some three years. With the Israeli declaration of Independence in 1948, four Arab countries invaded the territory including Palestine. When the war ended, Gaza was controlled by Egypt and another area, the West Bank, by Jordan. They contained thousands of Palestinians who had fled or were driven by force from what is now Israel.

But then, in 1967, after another war, Israel occupied these Palestinian areas and Israeli troops stayed there for years. Israelis hoped they might exchange the land they won for Arab countries recognition of Israel's right to exist and an end to the fighting. Life for the many of the 1.5 million Palestinians who lived in the Gaza Strip became one of resigned poverty and hardship.

In today's Palestine, Israel controls the Gaza coastline and all the entry and exit crossings into Israel. There is another Israeli-controlled crossing point into Egypt. There is no working airport. Because access is so restricted, not many commodities get into or out of Gaza. Food is allowed in, but there are shortages of meat, fresh vegetables and fruit.

The infrastructure in the Gaza Strip is primitive with frequent power cuts. Large numbers of people are unemployed because businesses cannot export their commodities out of Gaza to sell, and people don't have much money to buy goods and services. In Gaza where after so much shelling there are many houses, blocks of flats, schools and other buildings reduced to rubble, years later hardly any re-building has been done due to the Israeli blockade denying Gaza construction materials. In all parts of Palestine, Israeli control of water means that Palestinian farms and families are able to access only a fraction of the water freely available to the Israeli settlers.

Israel finally left the Gaza strip in 2005 but in 2006, Hamas won the Palestinian legislative elections and assumed administrative control of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. In 2007, Hamas led a military victory over Fatah, the secular Palestinian nationalist party, which, until then, had dominated the Palestinian National Authority.

Hamas was considered by the US, Canada, Jordan, Egypt and the EU as a terrorist organisation. Unlike Fatah, Hamas refuses to recognise Israel as a state and demands that Palestinians should be able to return to their old homes and advocates violence to achieve its aims. Likewise, the Israeli government and forces have used violence and still do in the occupied territories.

Since 2006, Israel has placed the Gaza Strip under a blockade, with tight controls of its borders and limits those who can get in and out. At the numerous checkpoints, delays holds up even pregnant women in labour trying to get to hospital. In the years since Israel withdrew its troops in 2005, Gaza has suffered from several Israeli offensives. The Israeli government said it undertook these attacks to prevent rockets being launched from the Gaza Strip into Israeli towns.

In 2008, Israel sent soldiers into Gaza. An estimated 1,300 people, many of them civilians, were killed including 13 Israeli soldiers before a ceasefire was declared. In 2012, at least 167 Palestinians and six Israelis were killed during an Israeli operation. After eight days a ceasefire was declared with both sides promising to stop attacks.

Most recently in July 2014, authorities said over 2,200 people were killed - most of them Palestinians - and many more injured, during 50 days of violence. A ceasefire was agreed between Israel and Hamas on 26 August. Since then, violence has continued inside and outside the Gaza Strip: violence from the Israeli armed forces against Palestinians and from the Palestinians against Israeli citizens.

Both Israelis and Palestinians have also pursued a religious fundamentalism which conveniently masked real material interests by presenting the conflict as a religious one between Judaism and Islam. The “*clash of religions*” conveniently masked the Israeli

state's land grab, its creation of settlements and displacement of indigenous Palestinians.

The response from the Palestinian has been a brutal terrorism; car and suicide bombings, rocket attacks, and the killing of civilians. The reprisals have been equally brutal; torture, imprisonment, assassinations, the construction of concrete walls and electric fences to turn the Gaza strip into a concentration camp of poverty and despair, isolated from both the outside world and from the West Bank.

The ideological war, couched in religious and ethnic terms, degenerated into a playground abuse of name-calling. Proxy defenders of Israel in the West claimed that any criticism of Israel was racist while supporters of the Palestinians responded by claiming that attacks on the Palestinians were "*Islamophobic*". That is not to say that real racist hatred towards Jews and Arabs does not exist; but that "*racism*", like "*religion*", is used in the ideological war by both sides.

As ever in wars, ideology is used to disguise the pursuit of material interests. On the one hand there is the old Zionist demand for a Jewish state, and on the other hand the struggle to hold onto some at least of the old Palestinian lands. And both sides claim their god is on their side, while Christians also demand access to their "*Holy Land*" and especially to Jerusalem.

Palestinian self-rule in the Gaza Strip changed little. Within the fledgling Palestinian its own forces of coercion were established, notably a militia and police force, not only to protect ruling class interests from external interference but also to protect their interest from other competing political groups, like Fatah and of course from working class interests. And not without reason giving the periodic violent conflict between factions of the ruling class within Palestine. It was not until 2014 that the Fatah authorities recognised the legitimacy of Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

There is still tensions which will come to the fore if and when a fully Palestinian state is realised. Again the working class will be the losers. And their supposed "*supporters*" in the capitalist Left will quietly disappear as they did in Vietnam, Northern Ireland, Zimbabwe, South Africa and elsewhere, where, once fashionable "*freedom fighters against Imperialism*" were replaced with a ruthless anti-working class regime.

Very little is said about trade union organisation either in the Gaza strip or in the West Bank, or the existence of the class struggle "*between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess*" or, indeed the difficulty facing any socialists organising there. Nothing seems to change from one decade to the next. The death toll just continues to rise and the hated is just passed down from one generation to the next.

Socialists against all Wars

The socialist position on the Israeli- Palestinian conflict is unique in as much as socialists do not take sides in a violent dispute over territory - a struggle for Israel to take more land and for the Palestinians to establish a separate Palestinian State. Socialists do not support the state terrorism of Israel nor do we support the terrorism of Hamas, indiscriminately firing rockets into Israel.

Socialists, like the working class generally have no interests at stake in international and national struggle. We have nothing in common either with the well organised and sourced pro- Israel lobby in Britain or with the pro-Palestine groups on the capitalist left such as the Socialist Party, SWP and the misnamed Stop the War Coalition with its mixture of radical Islamist and Leninist politics.

Of course socialists are aware of the deaths and destruction seventy years of conflict has caused workers living in both Palestine and Israel. We are also aware that the ruling class in both countries garner support from their respective working class by conflating diametrically opposing class interests into one false "*national interest*". And socialists have also recognised the overwhelming force used by the Israeli state against Palestinians causing death and destruction to civilians in the Gaza Strip and in Jerusalem and the West Bank

In conflicts between two capitalist states or would-be capitalist states, socialists do not take sides. Socialists are under no illusion that the struggle to create a Palestinian state is the struggle to establish a capitalist state in which a minority capitalist class own the means of production and distribution and exploit a working class majority. In any case workers of all countries have more in common with each other than with their respective capitalist class and politicians.

The working class in Palestine face the same problems as workers in Israel. Like workers throughout the world, they must sell their labour power for wages and as such they are exploited working only to make a minority rich. They have a common interest in organising consciously, politically and democratically with workers elsewhere in the world to establish the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society.

THE TEA BREAK IS OVER

Marx said that the class struggle is fought over the extent and intensity of exploitation where employers try to force-out of the workers as much surplus value as possible. Under capitalism, employment time is profitable time. Marx's observation was correct. The capitalist tries to extend surplus labour time for as long as he possibly can. So it comes as no surprise that an assault has recently taken place on the traditional tea break. Only a fifth of staff now stops for a tea break, according to a report published for Fox's Biscuits (BT News 09 September 2013).

The report found increased workloads, tough bosses and the fear of being accused of slacking by colleagues as reasons for the disappearance of the tea break. Workers now spend less than 20 minutes away from their work station. Research by the TUC has not only supported the findings but has found workers carrying on work outside their contract hours by either working late, or on the way home or when they get home in the evening and it works out at about £32b of free work on top of the workers' contractual hours (TUC 27 February 2015).

The loss of the tea break in the working day, paradoxically, undermined performance. Loss of the tea break made workers feel more tired, stressed and demotivated. And, of course in the reduction in biscuits consumed ate into the profits of Fox's Biscuits who commissioned the PR report masquerading as detached academic research. More to the point, rather than calling time on the tea break, shouldn't workers be calling time on capitalism?

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THE FAILURE OF RUSSIAN CAPITALISM: 1917-1991

A letter has been received from Derek Crawford relating to Marx and Engels, Russian State Capitalism and the Collapse of Capitalism. We publish below the salient parts of his letter along with our reply.

While agreeing that the Soviet Union was a very poor example of communism, we must remember Marx and Engels endorsed the Russian revolution in 1882. They believed it could only succeed if complemented by insurrection in the West.

Although no angel, Lenin did give a plausible explanation of why the revolution had not occurred in Britain, citing as his authority, comments made by Frederick Engels as early as 1858. In SOCIALIST STUDIES, the Communist Party is referred to as any "opponent". Will it not be better for the many far-left parties to unite in opposing capitalism?

Regarding capitalism's collapse, a graph was sent to me (copy enclosed), showing gross profit as a percentage of gross domestic products, in other words, a rate of profit graph. The graph covers the period 1965 to 2003 and does not demonstrate an evidence of a fall. However, this period is only a fraction of the time since automation began in 1719. Also, if the cost of machinery or constant capital is deducted from production costs, the profit rate will undoubtedly be higher.

Our reply:

Russia was never "*Communist*". The wages system was never abolished in the Soviet Union; the working class majority did not consciously and politically establish the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society.

What happened in Russia, once the Bolsheviks gained political control through a *coup d'état*, was the imposition and development of wide-scale nationalisation through a centralised Party dictatorship, described accurately by the Socialist Party of Great Britain at the time as "*state capitalism*".

It is true that Marx and Engels were interested in Russia. However, they were insistent that any working class revolution for the establishment of socialism must be the work of the working class itself. This was stated in the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO and again in the articles of the First International. They did not see revolution as being the function of professional revolutionaries leading a mass of non-socialists.

In the introduction Engels wrote for the first reprinting of THE CLASS STRUGGLES IN FRANCE, in March 1895, towards the end of his life, he said:

...the time of surprise attacks, of revolution carried out by small conscious minorities at the head of the unconscious masses is irrevocably past. Where it is a question of a complete transformation of the social organism, the masses themselves must also be

in it, must themselves already have grasped what is at stake, what they are going in for, body and soul. The history of the last fifty years has taught us that. But in order that the masses may understand what is to be done, long persistent work is required and it is just this work which we are now pursuing and with a success which drives the enemy to despair (MARX AND ENGELS, SELECTED WORKS, London 1968 pp 651-68).

Lenin, on the other hand, looked backwards to the conspiratorial politics of Louis Blanqui. Lenin did not think that the workers were cut out for socialism and wrote them off in his book WHAT IS TO BE DONE? as only being capable of reaching “*trade union consciousness*”. But, contra Lenin’s elitism, workers by their own conscious and political effort, founded the Socialist Party of Great Britain a year later, in 1904, with socialism as its one and only object!

Socialism has to be established world-wide. Marx and Engels were correct in their judgement that since capitalism was a global system of production and distribution; socialism would likewise have to be a global system of production and distribution. However, in 1918 the workers in the leading industrial countries had all been killing each other on the battlefields of Europe for the best part of five years and socialist revolution was unlikely. So, even if socialists had tried to establish socialism/communism (both words mean the same thing) in Russia they would have failed. You cannot have socialism in one country.

Lenin was no “*Angel*” but he was no socialist either. Not only did he think workers were incapable of establishing socialism but he paid little attention to Marx’s theory of history. In 1918, the SPGB demonstrated that Russia could not have been “*socialist*” because the social conditions necessary for socialism did not exist there. Russia was feudal, industrially backward and populated largely by a peasant majority.

As for the so called “*Communist Party*”, it exported Lenin’s reactionary and conservative Blanquist theories back into Britain, a backward step which did immense harm. The Communist Party, from its formation in 1921, twisted and turned at the behest of Moscow’s own changing policies, first under Lenin then under Stalin. They opposed and then supported the Second World War. The SPGB, on the other hand, opposed the Second World War from the start, not by following orders issued by the Kremlin but on the basis of the interest of the working class.

The Socialist Party of Great Britain also rejects the tag “*far-left*” as a description of our OBJECT and PRINCIPLES. We have never had anything in common with the opportunism of the Communist Party in Britain who rejected Parliament as a revolutionary means to overthrow capitalism, who supported one capitalist country as opposed to another and misleadingly referred to Russia as “*Socialist*” when in fact it was an anti-working class dictatorship.

Finally a little should be said about the collapse of capitalism. The collapse of capitalism was an article of faith held by the Communist Party. This doctrine was rejected by the SPGB and a pamphlet to this affect was published in 1932. Marx did not hold a “*collapse*” theory of capitalism either although Engels temporary went off the rails for a time when he could not see the Great Depression ending at the end of the 19th century.

Marx’s discussion of the falling rate of profit in the third volume of CAPITAL was a discussion based on concerns found in the writings of Ricardo and Mill that capitalism might collapse. Marx looked at “*The Law itself*” in chapter 13, stated that it was a “*tendency*” and in the next chapter, “*Counteracting Influences*”, gave a number of counteracting influences which reacted to the tendency of the rate of profit to fall; increasing the intensity of exploitation, depression of wages below the value of labour-power, cheapening elements of constant capital, relative overpopulation, foreign trade and the increase of stock capital.

It appears that you believe capitalism will not collapse although you state that the graph you were given only demonstrated this for the period “*1965 to 2003*”. You state that this is only “*a fraction of time since automation began in 1719*”. But of course since capitalism did not collapse between 1719 and 1966 we can then confidentially state that capitalism has not collapsed for the best part of three centuries and looks no likely to collapse in the near future.

The collapse of capitalism was a scare tactic used by the Communist Party to gain support from non-socialist workers. Because they believed the working class was incapable of thinking for itself they wanted to scare workers into action, a tactic continued today by groups like The Socialist Party and The Socialist Workers Party. It is a deceitful politics and it has failed miserably.

There is no “*prophecy*” in the three volumes of CAPITAL. CAPITAL is a scientific exposition of capitalism and its laws of motion. Marx was a scientist not an astrologer. Only a conscious and political majority can establish socialism. The creation of more and more socialists is the “*central advancement*” needed to establish socialism.

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Object and Declaration of Principles

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN HOLDS:

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (ie land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.
5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.
7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

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